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The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The present report responds to the Economic and Social Council's ministerial communiqué on the theme "The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women",[1] which was adopted by the Council at the high-level segment of its substantive session of 1999, in which the Ministers and Heads of Delegations participating in the high-level segment of the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a progress report to the Council at its substantive session of 2000, and called upon the relevant organizations of the United Nations system to take consistent, coherent, coordinated and joint actions in support of national efforts to eradicate poverty, with particular attention to employment creation and work and the empowerment and advancement of women. These organizations, especially the United Nations funds and programmes and specialized agencies, were also requested to translate the recommendations of the communiqué into concrete action.

2. The present report has been prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, with contributions by the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the regional commissions. The report assesses progress in implementing key recommendations in the communiqué by the United Nations system in support of national efforts.

3. In view of the relatively brief period between the adoption of the communiqué and the submission of the present report, the review of progress set out in section II below is based primarily on the relevant activities of the organization of the United Nations system conducted, for the most part, within the framework of follow-up to global conferences and other major initiatives. The major developments that contributed to the progress towards the goals of the communiqué include the five-year review of the World Summit for Social Development and of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the follow-up activities by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Full Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods led by the ILO, the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006), the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) debt initiative, the tenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD X), the World Education Forum and the financing for development process.

4. National development experience relevant to the implementation of recommendations of the communiqué are also presented in boxes 1-4 to illustrate national efforts supported by the organizations of the United Nations system.

5. Challenges are identified in section III and recommendations are made in section IV for consideration by the Economic and Social Council with respect to the further implementation of the recommendations contained in the communiqué.

II. Progress in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the ministerial communiqué adopted by the Economic and Social Council at the high-level segment of its substantive session of 1999

6. The table set out below details progress in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the ministerial communiqué.

Progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the ministerial communiqué adopted by the Economic and Social Council at the high-level segment of its substantive session of 1999

Key recommendations in the ministerial communiqué	*Implementation and key developments*
... we undertake to adopt effective **poverty eradication** strategies, which address employment creation and gender-specific policies (para. 1)	**Poverty eradication.** Many Governments have set national poverty reduction targets and formulated poverty eradication plans and strategies. Stronger emphasis has been placed on the promotion of macroeconomic growth, the creation and expansion of social security systems, efforts to increase public transfers and public spending on social services, equitable growth, promotion of employment opportunities and creation of income-generating activities, capacity development, and specific programmes and projects in such areas as rural infrastructure development. The important achievement after the Fourth World Conference on Women has been recognition by many Governments of a gender dimension of poverty and their efforts to refocus the poverty eradication programmes and policies to address the needs and concerns of women. More than half of 116 member States that submitted their national action plans for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action to the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat reported the establishment of policies and programmes for the eradication of poverty among women by promoting employment and income-generating activities, providing basic social services and improving social security systems. Many Governments have set up institutions and mechanisms specifically with responsibilities for implementing the poverty eradication programmes to which countries committed themselves at the World Summit for Social Development. Community participation in projects and programmes to eradicate poverty has been found particularly useful in many countries.
The need to promote dynamic, sustained and human-centred economic growth and development in a manner that generates **employment** (para. 3)	**Employment generation.** Full and productive employment has come to the fore of socio-economic development in recognition of the key importance of employment to poverty eradication. A number of Governments have developed national employment plans and strategies, including macroeconomic policies, such as the liberalization of trade and capital flows, fiscal and monetary policy, and economic and structural adjustment; the establishment of consultation mechanisms with social partners and civil society in the formulation of employment policies; specific labour market policies to reduce unemployment among women, youth, older persons, disabled and other vulnerable groups; education, training and skill-enhancement of the workforce; efforts to increase labour

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	market flexibility; the creation of an enabling environment for private sector growth and for the strengthening of productivity and incomes in small and medium-sized enterprises; local and regional employment initiatives; and enhancement of the quality of employment. Labour-intensive public work programmes, in particular infrastructure-intensive public works programmes roads, such as farm-to-market roads, environmental rehabilitation, irrigation and urban regeneration schemes have promoted employment and stimulated people-centred sustainable development. The ILO has been taking a leading role to promote a more coherent framework of policy advice on employment and combat poverty through the promotion of anti-poverty strategies based on job creation in collaboration with other entities of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. It has launched a comprehensive reform to make itself more responsive to the needs of these objectives. The reform includes (a) the launching of the "decent work agenda", with four strategic objectives: (i) the creation of greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income, (ii) the promotion and realization of fundamental principles and rights at work, (iii) enhancing the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all, and (iv) strengthening tripartism and social dialogue; (b) the creation of specific "in-focus programmes" addressing particular areas of assistance to member States; and (c) the promotion of the "Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work", which includes the eradication of child and forced labour, work against discrimination and the promotion of freedom of association and collective bargaining. The ILO has also reviewed national employment policies of several developing countries. These reviews have been successful in helping member States to strengthen policies for reducing policies for unemployment or maintaining comparatively low unemployment rates through the adoption of innovative employment and labour market policies.
The promotion of **women's equal participation** with men in the planning, decision-making and implementation of strategies (para. 3)	**Gender equality.** In the five-year review of the Fourth World Conference on Women, it was noted that Governments have increasingly recognized a gender equality approach to policy design, formulation and implementation, and consequently made efforts to refocus policies in order to achieve gender equality in all sectors. This policy transformation is reflected in their efforts to mainstream a gender equality perspective into national policies for poverty eradication. The majority of the countries that responded to the Secretary-General's questionnaire on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action have reported on their concrete activities and initiatives in that area. Many countries have also been making efforts to implement more comprehensive policies directed to the achievement of gender equality in education, training and employment, as well as the provision of equal access to capital and productive resources.
The need to aim at improving **market outcomes** for all people	**Market outcome.** There have been efforts to integrate income support policies into active labour market policies for those marginalized from the labour market. It is increasingly recognized

Key recommendations in the ministerial communiqué	*Implementation and key developments*
living in poverty, especially women and vulnerable groups (para. 3)	that these policies are an important tool to reduce the dependency of individuals, in particular women, on social assistance and to reintegrate them into the world of work and society.
The development of public policies to provide an enabling environment for the efficient functioning of **markets** while promoting equality and social protection (para. 3)	Although employment has increased in some countries, often new jobs are of low quality and associated with insecurity, low wages and inadequate social protection.
To encourage appropriate **technology transfer** and support **capacity-building** for developing countries and countries with economies in transition (para. 4)	**Capacity-building and technology transfer.** As globalization, liberalization and digitalization of information have created the demand for new skills, training and lifelong learning need to be given the highest priority. Capacity development has been increasingly accepted as a dynamic process of individual and institutional learning, and recognized as an important means of creating a national socio-economic environment conducive to development and social progress. Countries have taken a number of actions to enhance their capacities in adopting long-term strategies for socio-economic development, developing their institutional capacities, taking legislative action to create an enabling environment, establishing partnership with civil society, involving people in the management of their local affairs, mainstreaming a gender perspective into policies and programmes, strengthening the implementation, and monitoring and evaluating social policies, programmes and projects. UNCTAD X recognized the importance of technology transfer and technological development for the integration and participation of developing countries in the international economy. Technological development should be encouraged by domestic and international actions, such as human resource development, establishment and enhancing of appropriate policy and legal frameworks and the establishment of science and technology institutes and infrastructure.
To reinforce conditions for a more favourable climate for **international trade** (para. 4) To increase **investment** in developing countries and in countries with economies in transition (para. 4)	**International trade and investment.** The liberalization of national trade regimes has enhanced opportunities for trade-based growth. However, there are certain imbalances and asymmetries that exist in international trade, and they need to be addressed to ensure that multilateral trading system results in mutual benefits for all countries. The World Trade Organization (WTO) has initiated negotiation in agriculture and services, and has supported the early launch of a new round of multilateral trade negotiations, which would bring benefits to all countries including the poorest. IMF has been encouraged to give emphasis to trade policy reforms in its policy advice to all its members, including under IMF-supported programmes and in country poverty reduction strategies. UNCTAD X established the plan of action to promote, in cooperation with national Governments and civil society, more favourable conditions for international trade and investment, in particular for developing countries, and to integrate themselves more fully into and derive benefits from the international trading system.

Key recommendations in the ministerial communiqué	*Implementation and key developments*
To promote **international cooperation** aimed at sustained economic growth, stable market and job creation (para. 4)	**International cooperation.** UNCTAD X promoted South-South cooperation and economic cooperation among developing countries (ECDC). It encouraged the sharing of development experiences among developing countries at different stages of development in cooperation with developed countries, the expansion of mutual trade and investment, and the increase of industrial and technological cooperation. UNDP has also been promoting technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC). It promotes the sharing of technical capacities, and the cooperative partnership among developing countries, developed countries, the organizations of the United Nations development system, and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.
To undertake measures aimed at the effective **mobilization of financial resources** for development (para. 4) To call upon developed countries to strengthen their efforts to achieve, as soon as possible the **agreed target** ... (para. 4)	**Financial resources.** At its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly agreed to convene a high-level intergovernmental event on financing for development in 2001. It will consider national, international and systemic issues relating to financing for development in a holistic manner in the context of globalization and interdependence, addressing the mobilization of financial resources for the full implementation of the outcome of the major United Nations conferences and summits of the 1990s. An agenda for the event has been finalized by its preparatory committee and will be before the next session of the General Assembly for approval. The preparatory process is being undertaken in close cooperation with the regional commissions, UNCTAD, the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO and other concerned United Nations agencies and programmes. Levels of overall official development assistance (ODA) have continued to decline. Only four countries have met the agreed target, with one more country about to reach it. Norway will provide 1.00 per cent of their gross national product for overall official development assistance. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) donor countries have recently made an effort to unite their ODA to respond better and effectively to national development needs.
We reaffirm the commitment we made at the World Summit for Social Development to the goal of eradicating poverty in the world through decisive national actions and international cooperation ... and to promote the goal of full employment ...	The special session of the General Assembly on the five-year review of the Summit is expected to reaffirm the commitment to the Copenhagen outcomes, and will identify further actions and initiatives to implement the commitments agreed at the Summit. The Commission for Social Development has prepared an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit (E/CN.5/2000/L.8) as a follow-up to the Summit. Within the follow-up framework of the Summit, the United Nations funds and programmes, Bretton Woods institutions and relevant specialized agencies have undertaken wide-ranging activities, including assisting national efforts in initiating new national policies and programmes. The Preparatory Committee for the special session of the General Assembly on the five-year review of the Summit invited UNDP to report on creating and improving sustainable livelihoods for those living in poverty, paying special attention to the links between employment/jobs, resources and the environment. The Preparatory Committee also requested the ILO and other relevant organizations of the United Nations system to

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	analyse various employment-related issues and prepare concrete suggestions for employment generation, taking into account gender-specific obstacles to employment as well as the goal of equal employment opportunities. In assisting Governments in giving substance to their commitment made at the Summit, the ILO has been undertaking various initiatives to promote the goal of full employment and quality employment through an appropriate choice of economic and social policies, as well as through the establishment of efficient institutions and the necessary legal framework. Four regional follow-up meetings to the Summit organized by the ILO agreed on the centrality of employment promotion in any economic strategy, the need for active labour market policies and programmes, and the need for Ministries of Labour to collect and disseminate labour market information and to target employment programmes on vulnerable groups. An international consultation on the follow-up to the Summit held in Geneva in November 1999 also adopted a set of conclusions with regard to employment generation and the reduction of poverty, and the consultation called on the ILO, in collaboration with the tripartite partners and the agencies of the United Nations system, to develop new operational initiatives in the employment policy field and to organize a process of mutual learning and sharing of experience on successful employment and labour market policies. The ILO has prepared country employment policy reviews in all regions to provide support to Governments, employers' and workers' organizations in formulating policies and programmes leading to full employment with full respect for workers' rights, thus also covering issues of child labour and gender.
We also reaffirm that, as set forth at the Fourth World Conference on Women, we are determined to promote women's economic independence, including employment, and to eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic structures (para. 2)	The twenty-third special session of the General Assembly will review the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women under the theme "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace in the twenty-first century". In its resolution 54/142, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive report on progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action nationally, regionally and internationally. Such report was submitted to the third session of the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the special session. The ILO launched as part of its contribution to the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, the international programme on more and better jobs for women. It has been promoting the elimination of discrimination experienced by poor and vulnerable women who were unemployed, underemployed or who worked under unproductive, exploitative or abusive conditions. The programme has presented the message that more and better jobs for women make good economic and social sense, and benefit not only women but also society as a whole. The Economic Commission for Europe held a regional preparatory meeting on the 2000 review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Geneva in January 2000, on the theme "Women and the economy". It adopted a number of action-oriented recommendations, with priority emphasis on eliminating

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	discrimination against women in the labour market, increasing employment opportunities for women, promoting gender equality in social protection, and empowering women through access to and control over resources. Governments, international aid agencies and financial institutions have been called upon to assess the gender impact of poverty eradication and empowerment programmes in countries with economies in transition and developing countries. They were also called upon to bring concrete changes to the design and implementation of these programmes so that they effectively ensure women's access to the control over resources.
All States parties should fully implement their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international human rights instruments (para. 5)	Since the Fourth World Conference on Women, a total of 16 States have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, bringing the total number of States parties to the instrument to 165. On 6 October 1999, the Optional Protocol to the Convention was adopted by the General Assembly. On 10 December 1999, the Optional Protocol was opened for signature. Thirty-four States parties to the Convention have signed the Optional Protocol. The Optional Protocol incorporates the existing United Nations complaint procedures, addresses the principles of equality and non-discrimination, and reaffirms the determination of States parties which adopt the Protocol to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by women of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and to take effective action to prevent violations of these rights and freedom. Several countries have incorporated the Convention in their constitutions, stipulating that the Convention takes precedence over national legislation. Legislation has been reviewed and/or amended to address discriminatory provisions in areas ranging from civil, family and marriage law to criminal, labour, social security, health and education legislation. The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women has been ratified by 29 of a total of 35 Organization of American States member States, 15 since the Fourth World Conference on Women. In their responses, six Latin American and Caribbean States specifically cited the signing of this Convention as an achievement. Also, two member States from the African region noted among their achievements the signing of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The Sixth African Regional Conference on Women was convened by the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa in November 1999 to assess progress in the implementation of the Beijing and Dakar Platforms for Action for the Advancement of Women (2000-2004). It adopted the Declaration to put in place well-resourced and effective mechanisms to allow women to enjoy fully all their human rights and fundamental freedom, empowerment and gender equality.
Participatory mechanisms, including tripartite forms of social dialogue among Governments, workers' and employers'	The principle of equal participation of men and women in power and decision-making, affirmed by the Charter of the United Nations (Preamble, Article 8) has earned a long-standing recognition; however, there still remains a wide range of inequality between the participation of men and of women.

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organizations, can facilitate policy-making. The involvement of women's organizations in participatory mechanisms and the role of women within relevant organizations should be emphasized (para. 6)	Policies to increase women's equal participation in all levels of political and economic decision-making have been undertaken in many countries, including the setting of quotas for women's representation in state and municipal bodies and civil service occupations. Some countries employed policy measures to encourage the entry of women into decision-making in the private sector. UNESCO has been promoting a women's approach and vision in all matters concerning development at the local, national and international levels, aiming to help women participate fully in all decision/policy-making institutions. The Beijing Platform for Action has gained formal recognition to the roles of actors other than Government in promoting gender equality. The commitment of a number of actors has increased, including international organizations, civil society, political parties, the media and the private sector. There has been an increase of national and transnational women's networks, which are influencing the global gender in the formulation of principles, norms and institutional mechanisms. Policies in the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) are cognizant of the need to enable the poor to participate in and contribute to the growth process. This has been achieved through the formulation by the authorities in each country of a poverty reduction strategy and poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) through a participatory approach, which is also intended to enhance country ownership and accountability.
Employment growth has an impact on poverty reduction ... an effective development strategy could include targeting key economic sectors for employment-intensive growth ... Employment growth should be associated with wages that yield incomes above poverty line and a significant reduction of underemployment, disguised unemployment and underremunerated work among women and men at the same time (para. 7)	There has been increased attention by Governments and civil societies to the goal of full employment, policies for employment growth and the renewed perception that full employment was a feasible goal. Employment promotion has increasingly been put at the centre of socio-economic development in recognition of the importance of employment to poverty eradication. Many developing countries have strengthened their active employment promotion measures, including the introduction of programmes to create jobs in social services. These activities are relatively labour-intensive and have also met a growing demand for personal services, particularly for the elderly. In some economies in transition, there has been a change in the employment policies pursued after 1995. A more active approach to employment policies has been adopted and social protection systems for the unemployed have been reassessed. A more rigorous set of entitlement criteria for unemployment benefits has been introduced. It has become common policy to tie the system of unemployment benefits to an active labour market policy, encouraging more active job-seeking and participation in training programmes. Among active employment programmes, the most commonly practiced are subsidized employment schemes for vulnerable groups and support for small businesses. The ILO, through its employment-intensive investment programmes, has assisted developing countries in promoting employment while creating such basic infrastructure as feeder roads, irrigation canals and drains. It has been promoting job creation in small and medium-sized enterprises and the informal sector, as set out in its job creation in small and medium-sized

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	enterprises recommendation (No. 189) through a global programme, the international small enterprise programme. The ILO has also carried out the jobs for Africa programme, to develop a job-creation policy framework since 1998, aiming at stimulating employment-intensive growth in such areas as agriculture, small and medium-sized enterprises and the informal sector. The programme has received broad endorsement, for example from the African Employment Planners Meeting held in Abidjan in February 1999 and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Labour and Social Affairs Commission held in Windhoek in April 1999.
... we call for targeted policies and strategies aimed at empowerment of women including promulgation and enforcement of anti-discrimination and non-discriminatory legislation and equal employment opportunity policies A proactive gender policy requires equal access by girls and women to education and training, removal of wage differentials both via legislation and in practice, to guarantee the right of men and women to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, and equal access to high-level and decision-making occupations (para. 8) We also call for increased efforts to reduce the gap in unemployment rates between women and men, including through job-creation policies (para. 8)	The link between poverty and gender has been recognized by the international conferences and summits of the 1990s. Equality between women and men has also been widely accepted as essential for social development. Some countries have introduced legislation outlawing trafficking in women and prohibiting the sexual exploitation of children. Some countries have introduced or amended legislation to address sex discrimination in employment. These included prohibition of sex-specific employment advertisements, the requirement of proof of sterilization or infertility as a condition of employment and dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy, and provisions to confront sexual harassment in the workplace. A number of countries have also introduced legislative measures that, although not targeted directly to women, were expected to greatly benefit them. For example, laws increasing the minimum wage should improve the status of women because of their tendency to be clustered in low-wage jobs. Some Governments have introduced such incentives as subsidies for business that establish child-care facilities or special equality allowances as part of national income policy agreements. Laws have been introduced providing paid maternity and/or parental leave, and regulating conditions of part-time work, wages and hours for women working in private homes and public sector contracts.
Employment policies should focus on gender-sensitive labour policies that strengthen the interrelation between education, training, employment promotion, and social protection policies, taking into consideration a life-cycle approach (para. 15)	The international community has recognized the need to promote employment that meets labour standards as defined by relevant ILO and other international instruments, including prohibitions of forced and child labour, guarantees of the rights of freedom of association and bargaining collectively, equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value and non-discrimination in employment. This is reflected in the ILO's adoption of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and Its Follow-up. WHO has proposed health measures for full and productive employment, in particular for women: (a) improving and protecting the health status of poor and vulnerable people, including the disabled, as a means of improving their employability and access to livelihoods, (b) promoting safe and health setting for work, particularly for women in informal sector employment, (c) promoting social insurance and solidarity mechanisms, formal and informal, to protect households from the burden of health-care costs arising from occupational causes, including the informal sector, and (d) promoting the employability

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of women by creating community-based health and social services for sick and dependent family members.

UNEP has developed a strategy on mainstreaming gender in its policy, programming and operational procedures, aiming at establishing mechanisms and accountability processes to ensure integration of gender equity, building capacity of its staff members to carry out and commit to the strategy, and facilitating the contribution of UNEP to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The strategy document will be issued as a policy directive, which will be implemented by the gender focal point through the relevant substantive divisions of UNEP and the Human Resource Section of the United Nations Office at Nairobi during a two-year period.

UNEP is also preparing a framework for a global network of gender and environment focal points. The network will consist of focal points on gender and environment with Governments and global non-governmental organizations. It will serve as an information exchange and data-collection mechanism to contribute to capacity-building at the national and regional levels. It would be an effective channel to share lessons and experiences learned at the national and international levels.

The Conference on Women's Enterpreneurship was organized by the Economic Commission for Europe in cooperation with the Government of Croatia and OECD in Croatia in October 1999. It resulted in measures for ensuring greater access of potential women entrepreneurs to resources undertaken by policy makers in Central European countries, the strengthened existing networks of women entrepreneurs, and the closer cooperation between these networks and international organizations which are active in promoting women's enterpreneurship.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) held a regional seminar on the theme "Empowering women in poverty" in Bangladesh in July 1999, in cooperation with Grameen Bank. The seminar adopted the Regional Plan of Action for the Alleviation of Feminization of Poverty. It emphasized that empowerment of women in poverty constituted one of the main objectives of all development efforts and recognized that the rights of women in poverty were fundamental human rights. It called for the introduction of gender budgeting and the establishment of separate allocations for alleviating the feminization of poverty. It also urged the countries of the region to recognize that access to and control over such productive resources as credit, technology, and property rights in movable and immovable assets were a fundamental entitlement of women in poverty, and called for reform of the legal and regulatory systems to promote such access. The Regional Plan of Action urged the countries in the region to establish safety nets for women in poverty, with special focus on the self-employed, the disabled and the elderly.

At a high-level consultation on rural women and information held in 1999 within the global framework for follow-up to the World Food Summit and the implementation of the FAO Plan of Action for Women in Development, various stakeholders exchanged views

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	and shared expertise to fill the gaps and promote a synergy between them for a greater efficiency. FAO has been assisting member nations in the formulation of a land policy and in guiding projects to improve access to land by women using various land reform approaches (resettlement, leasing etc.) in a manner that is gender-responsive and environmentally sustainable.
... strategies for stimulating the development of small and medium enterprises as well as other forms of self-employment, including through entrepreneurial training, especially for women, can encourage employment creation and lead to poverty eradication (para. 9)	Recently, programmes focused on improving women's small business ownership were set up in many countries, including training in business and microenterprise management and marketing, as were programmes to improve women's access to credit. UNESCO has designed new strategies in playing the role of facilitator in bringing together the essential components, such as skill, capital, technical assistance, marketing, culture and creativity, necessary to help traditional craftspeople develop sustainable microenterprise; promoting traditional craftspeople; and facilitating their access to new markets. UNCTAD proposes, as part of its role defined in the plan of action of UNCTAD X, to engage in collecting and analysing data on best national practices stimulating enterprise development and identifying ways and means for developing small and medium-sized enterprises to meet international standards and to access and benefit from new technologies through networking and partnering, and to support national efforts to strengthen the innovative capacity of enterprises through the implementation of national policy reviews. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific organized a workshop-cum-study tour for Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam in cooperation with the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee. The workshop aimed to promote the role of small business in creating wage employment for the poor women, particularly in rural areas. The key elements of the success achieved by these small businesses were efficient use of credit facilities, securing inputs and ingredients at competitive prices, incorporating quality dimensions, adopting appropriate designs, and forging a continuing and trusting relationship with other small businesses supported by the Committee.
... we encourage the strengthening of existing and emerging microcredit institutions and their capacities, including through the support of international financial institutions (para. 10)	Since the World Summit for Social Development, microcredit and other financial instruments have received increasing attention as an effective means of empowering the poor and many countries have expanded access to such programmes. At the five-year review of the Fourth World Conference on Women, many countries also reported that credit, especially microcredit, has become a successful type of poverty eradication programme, which is contributing to women's economic empowerment. UNESCO has developed effective mechanisms for providing appropriate complementary services in the fields of education, science and technology, culture and communication to the clients of microfinance programmes, believing that the appropriate use of science, technology, communication and information can play a vital role in optimizing the output of the financial services.

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	UNESCO, in support of the microfinance movement, is designing activities, within the framework of a coherent strategy of poverty eradication, to (a) disseminate information on international best practices in sustainable microfinance with a view to increasing access to microfinance services for a maximum number of poor, especially women and (b) forge partnerships with successful microfinance institutions to provide the clients of these institutions with appropriate supporting programmes which will allow them to optimize the output of the financial services. It disseminates information on successful microfinance programmes to its 186 member States. It also signed the Summit Declaration of Support of the Microcredit Summit Council of the United Nations Agencies (1997) to achieve the Summit's goals — to ensure that 100 million of the world's poorest families will receive credit for self-employment and other financial and business services by the year 2005. The microcredit annual meeting of the councils was held in 1999 in Abidjan, with the participation of representatives from the United Nations system, with the goal of the Microcredit Summit that 100 million of the poorest families in the world would receive credit for self-employment and other financial and business services by the year 2005. The main objectives of the meeting were to enable microcredit practitioners to (a) share and further develop institutional plans that contribute to the fulfilment of the goal; (b) share experiences on the best practices and constraints that hamper the fulfilment of the goal; and (c) identify ways and means of addressing those challenges. It also identified a number of constraints in the development of microcredit programmes, including the lack of reliable sources of finance, especially at the start of a programme; the difficulty of determining appropriate interest rates on loans for the poor; the lack of an enabling environment due to unfavourable government regulatory systems; and hostile banking sectors and lack of support for training institutions. The ILO has been providing support for the development of microfinance institutions and the design of legal and regulatory frameworks in many countries worldwide. A regional observatory was established for the microfinance institutions in West Africa. The World Bank and the African Development Bank are interested in replicating it elsewhere in Africa. An Inter-American Forum on microenterprise, which was co-sponsored by the Inter-American Development Bank, the United States Agency for International Development and the World Savings Bank Institute, was held in 1999. The Forum addressed the experiences and challenges in regulating and supervising microfinance; microenterprise and microfinance; microfinance in emergency situations; the role of the state in developing the microenterprise sector; microenterprise and the environment; and sustainability versus outreach in microfinance.

Key recommendations in the ministerial communiqué	*Implementation and key developments*
We recognize the need for appropriate employment security, as far as possible, for women and men workers who are in part-time, contract, seasonal, temporary work, and social protection for those engaged outside of the formal sectors ... the need to ensure that such types of work are not sub-standard in terms of working conditions, social protection and protection against unfair dismissal (para. 11)	There has been a significant growth of part-time or temporary contracts, self-employment and informal sector employment in developing countries. Their flexible work arrangements have resulted in the creation of low-skilled and low-paid jobs. The ILO has launched the strategies and tools against social exclusion and poverty (STEP) programmes. It focuses on combating social exclusion and extending social protection, which have been outside of the scope of more traditional social protection schemes, to the large parentage of the population in developing and economies in transition. STEP expects to receive a $16 million donation. IMF works closely with the World Bank and regional development banks in providing policy advice and in the design of social safety nets. Social safety nets in IMF-supported programmes include new temporary measures, such as temporary subsidies and public works programmes, as well as existing arrangements adapted appropriately. The programmes also have sought to promote universal access to basic social services.
We acknowledge the need to address the contribution of women to the economy, both their unremunerated and remunerated work ... and the conditions of those working at home (para. 11)	Women's unpaid work remains unrecognized and unaccounted for in national accounts. A number of countries reported that they have begun to study the measurement and valuing of unpaid labour in the household.
We recognize the need to promote and protect the rights and welfare of all migrants and encourage member States to consider acceding to and ratifying the International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families as well as the Slavery Convention of 1926. We also invite concerned member States to consider adopting appropriate legal measures against intermediaries who deliberately encourage the clandestine movement of workers and who exploit women migrant workers (para. 12)	The volume of unauthorized migrants has been on the rise, and thus national policies on migrant workers have been placed under an increasing strain. The protection of migrant workers required the adoption of a broad range of targeted policies, and Governments are urged to intensify efforts to provide basic social services, promote social and economic integration, and ensure their equal treatment before the law. There has not been enough accession and ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families for it to come into force. Since the World Summit for Social Development, progress in implementing international instruments on the protection of migrants has been limited, and problems concerning the violation of the human rights of migrants have persisted. Migrants have been subjected to discrimination and documented migrants have not received adequate social protection. Only a few countries have established provisions requiring the same standard of working conditions afforded to women nationals to be extended to immigrant and migrant women workers, as well as the same protection against gender-based violence. The ILO has undertaken action focused on the evaluation of the experience of advanced countries in using various instruments to manage migration and the integration of immigrants, developing a global database on international labour migration which could be accessed easily by constituents and the public at large, and providing technical support for a regional cooperation effort among countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the field of migration policy.

Key recommendations in the ministerial communiqué	*Implementation and key developments*
We encourage member States to adopt and implement legislation to ensure the elimination of violence against women, emphasizing the prevention of violence and the prosecution of offenders and to take measures to ensure the protection of women subjected to violence, their access to just and effective remedies, including compensation, indemnification and healing (para. 13)	The elimination, prevention, and punishment of violence against women have been a major area of attention of Governments since the Fourth World Conference on Women. A significant number of countries have amended criminal codes or introduced legislation recognizing domestic violence as a crime, with several defining marital rapes as a crime and specifying punishment for perpetrators. Penalties for rape and sexual assault have increased in several countries, and procedural and evidentiary reforms with regard to these crimes have been introduced to ensure their prosecution and to protect victims. WHO is currently conducting a multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women. The study aims to provide data on the prevalence, determinants, related risk factors, protective factors and health consequences of violence against women. It is also committed to several corollary outcomes: (a) developing and testing new instruments for measuring violence cross-culturally, (b) increased national capacity of researchers and women's NGOs, (c) increased sensitivity to the subject among researchers, policy makers and health providers and (d) ensuring that the results are used for the development of policies and interventions. WHO also promotes a programme on violence and injuries prevention, which aims to develop global strategies for violence prevention and management and care of those affected by violence, to assist countries in developing sound national policies. It has identified women and young girls as a group requiring intensified assistance in the area of violence prevention. It has developed a violence against women database, which provides an international knowledge base on health aspects of violence against women. The database contains representative data from all WHO regions, and has contributed statistics to numerous United Nations projects. It has also implemented projects for the marginalization of women through the exercise of violence prevention, such as technical assistance in improving the accessibility of health services for women affected by violence. A trainer's guide for health and social workers, "The capacity to care", has been produced to provide counselling to those affected by violence.
... policy approach for the informal sector ... includes the improvement of access for those living in poverty, especially for women and vulnerable groups, to credit especially microcredit, training, technology and marketing techniques, while continuing efforts to incorporate as much as possible the informal sector into the formal economy (para. 14)	The informal sector has been growing in many developing countries. A major challenge for employment policy is to increase productivity, upgrade income and social protection in the informal sector. The ILO has placed greater emphasis on the development of links between formal sector enterprises and informal sector workers and microenterprises as a means of helping informal sector workers. Guidelines and training modules have been developed and disseminated.

Key recommendations in the ministerial communiqué	*Implementation and key developments*
We also recommend that public policies avoid reduction of expenditure on health, education and skill development that benefits the people living in poverty and those most in need under conditions of budgetary constraints. We recommend the further promotion and implementation of the 20/20 initiative in interested countries with the view to bolstering policies and resource allocation in these decisive areas (para. 15)	There is a need for additional resources in order to pursue effectively the social development agenda, while highlighting the difficulties and limitations of many countries, in particular developing countries, in raising or reallocating domestic resources. Currently allocations for basic social services fall short by about a third of the financial requirements to achieve universal coverage. These requirements are estimated at about $206 billion to $216 billion per year. Today, the amount of funds channelled to these services is conservatively estimated at about $136 billion. Therefore, an increase of at least $70 billion to $80 billion will be needed annually to provide coverage to all. The 20/20 initiative has encouraged interested Governments and donors to increase the amount of resources earmarked for a basic social service and to enhance equity and efficiency in their use. However, with regard to the implementation of the 20/20 initiative, budget allocations to basic social services have tended to vary between 12 and 14 per cent of the national budget; very few of them spend less than 10 per cent, while very few spend 20 per cent or more.
We welcome the adoption of the ILO Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. We reiterate our call on all States to translate into concrete action their commitment to the progressive and effective elimination of child labour contrary to accepted international standards, and urge them, as a matter of priority, to eliminate the worst forms of child labour ... (para. 16)	The International Labour Conference in 1999 unanimously adopted the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, calling for immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency. The Convention will enter into force in November 2000. Sixteen countries have ratified it. The ILO has been providing back-up for the implementation of core conventions. This applies to such programmes as the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), which is the world's largest technical cooperation programme in this field. The programme has already been operationalized in 65 countries and continues to expand rapidly. Many of the activities of IPEC have been promotional, informing groups of their rights and assisting Governments in revising legislation. In addition, these programmes rely heavily on local support. Thus, IPEC has been a partner in major initiatives to remove children from certain industries, such as the garments industry. These activities have led to positive changes in the communities concerned as families have shown themselves willing to withdraw their children from work and send them to school. Thirty-three countries have signed formal agreements with the IPEC, thereby committing them to adopt a policy and to launch a national action programme.
Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace ... Investing in formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women ... has proved to be one of the best means of achieving	The World Education Forum (WEF), held in Dakar in April 2000, adopted the Global Framework for Action, which would be an agenda for education in the twenty-first century. At the Forum, Governments committed themselves to the achievement of Education for All (EFA) goals and targets for every citizen and society. The EFA assessment demonstrated that while there has been significant progress in many countries during the 1990s, a vast number of children are still excluded from an effective education and millions of young people and adults are denied access to literacy and the skills and knowledge necessary to

Key recommendations in the ministerial communiqué	*Implementation and key developments*
sustainable development and economic growth ... (para. 17)	gainful employment and effective participation in society. Governments are collectively committed to attaining a number of goals, such as expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, ensuring that all children complete good quality primary education by 2015, providing equitable access to basic and continuing education programmes for adults and achieving a 50 per cent reduction in current gender disparities within a decade, and eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 as a milestone towards achieving gender equality in education programmes and systems by 2015. To achieve these goals, Governments and organizations represented at WEF pledged to undertake such actions as promoting Education For All policies, ensuring the engagement and participation of civil society in educational development, implementing integrated sector strategies for gender equality in education, and systematically monitoring progress towards education for all goals at the national, regional and international levels. In recognition of the fact that poverty cannot be overcome without specific, immediate and sustained attention to girls' education, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his report entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century" (A/54/2000), urged the Millennium Summit to endorse the objectives of demonstrably narrowing the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005 and of ensuring that by 2015 all children complete a full course of primary education. UNESCO has implemented a series of innovative projects to provide educational opportunities to various target groups living in difficult conditions, particularly girls. More than 30 member States, mostly in Africa, have benefited from refocused access to basic education for girls and women. In February 1999, UNESCO and the United Nations Children's Fund signed a memorandum of understanding for joint activities aimed at expanding educational opportunities for girls and women. Many countries have reported progress in breaking the vicious circle of poverty through the expansion of women's capabilities, *inter alia*, by eradicating illiteracy and increasing the educational level among women and girls. In several regions, laws have been introduced to entitle pregnant schoolgirls to remain in or return to school, and in some States, laws relating to education have been revised to enshrine sex equality and incorporate human rights into the curriculum. The World Food Programme provides food support for women's training programmes to allow women to learn literacy and numeracy, to participate in skill-building training and to increase their self-confidence. WFP also supports equity in children's education, providing foods on a take-home basis to families with 50 per cent of the primary education food aid targeted to girls.
... the mobilization of new and additional financial resources from all sources, national and international, is required. Furthermore, debt relief under the HIPC	Since the World Summit for Social Development, reforms to promote the effective and efficient utilization of existing resources have received increasing attention. The involvement and cooperation of local authorities, civil society and beneficiary communities have been found to be valuable in raising efficiency in the delivery of financial resources. Poverty eradication through

Key recommendations in the ministerial communiqué	*Implementation and key developments*
initiative should strive to achieve faster, deeper and broader debt relief to eliminate unsustainable debt burdens for the poorest countries (para. 18)	sustainable development is seen by most donor countries as the main objective of development cooperation. **HIPC initiative.** The initiative has recently been strengthened to provide faster, deeper and broader debt relief, in particular through an earlier cash flow relief (interim relief), an earlier stock reduction, and the link between debt relief and poverty reduction. Progress has been made in implementing this enhanced HIPC framework. Five countries — Bolivia, Mauritania, Mozambique, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda — have reached their decision points, bringing total committed debt relief under the HIPC initiative to more than US$ 14 billion. Up to 15 additional country cases could be considered by the World Bank and IMF Executive Boards this year. IMF and the World Bank have established a joint implementation committee to facilitate effective implementation of the enhanced HIPC initiative and the new poverty reduction strategy approach. However, as noted during preparations for the five-year review of the World Summit for Social Development, while the HIPC initiative has the potential to reduce debt-servicing costs significantly for the countries, the fact remains that it has so far benefited only a few of them. A few lender countries have adopted bilateral debt cancellation initiatives, which go beyond the HIPC initiative. The present underfunding of the HIPC initiative is a major concern for many Governments, and successful implementation of the HIPC initiative will depend on the timely availability of adequate financing to meet their full debt relief costs. Many multilateral institutions need additional bilateral support on an urgent basis. The Bretton Woods institutions have begun to pay more focused attention to the social development dimension in their lending policies. The incorporation of social policies into IMF-supported programmes relies on collaboration with the World Bank and other institutions, such as the ILO, UNDP and WHO. In November 1999, the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) of IMF was replaced by the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF). It places the reduction of poverty as a key objective for IMF concessional lending to low-income countries. Beyond the existing collaboration arrangements with the United Nations system, the new PRGF will benefit from the strengthening of collaboration under the new poverty-focused approach.

Box 1

National experience on participatory approach: Republic of Korea

Since the onset of the Asian financial crisis in 1997, which turned into the recent economic crisis in the Republic of Korea, growing unemployment and its impact on poverty have become the focal issue in the past two years. With inadequate social welfare and protection systems in place, the crisis has placed heavy burdens on the "old poor" as well as the recently unemployed "new poor".

The national Government had not employed poverty measurements, and as a result the country did not have an official poverty line and standardized criteria for setting the minimum cost of living as a basis for providing public assistance. Hence, as a matter of national priority in measuring the social impact of the crisis, the Republic of Korea needed, as a first step, to have accurate assessments of the poverty situation. In view of the situation, UNDP and the Government commissioned a national poverty report that examined the current status of the poverty situation in the aftermath of the crisis. The report was to contribute to the setting up of an effective poverty monitoring system and to strengthening and improving the existing social safety net programmes.

When the preliminary draft of the commissioned poverty report was ready, UNDP and a leading civil society organization in the Republic of Korea co-organized a round-table forum on the theme "Poverty status and monitoring in the Republic of Korea" in November 1999, which was attended by participants from the Presidential Office for Quality-of-Life Improvement, government ministries, legislature, academia, research institutes and NGOs, international trade unions, the media and the World Bank office in Seoul.

The Forum was part of a consultative process predicated on the pressing need for a more participatory and multisectoral approach in dealing with such important issues as the poverty situation and its monitoring in the Republic of Korea. UNDP played an important role in bringing together constituents representing different segments of Korean society around the table to engage in an open dialogue and exchange of views on the vital issue facing the country. Through this kind of participatory and consultative process, diverse views on poverty issues were shared, and more importantly resulted in enhanced anti-poverty policy recommendations and appropriate budget allocations for social welfare.

Source: 1999 annual report of the resident coordinators.

Box 2

National experience on job creation: Jamaica

The United Nations agencies continued their focus on poverty eradication in support of the Government of Jamaica's national agenda. During 1999, UNDP continued its support to poverty eradication efforts through the provision of assistance to the national poverty eradication programme (NPEP). Elaborated in late 1995 with support from UNDP, NPEP was a central tool of the Government to reduce poverty in Jamaica. Comprehensive in scope, NPEP prescribes an integrated multi-strategic approach to optimize the use of existing resources; partnership to mobilize the involvement of all sectors of society; community-based participation to foster empowerment; sustainability for long-term development; and phased implementation to ensure that resources are systematically targeted to the areas of most need.

Following the provision of financial and technical support through a preparatory assistance programme, aimed at building the "enabling environment" at the community level to support the implementation of NPEP, specific support was provided in 1999 for the training of community residents and piloting of income-generating projects in selected communities. A full-scale project document, currently under formulation, focuses on skills training, business management and access to microcredit to support the establishment of microenterprise initiatives in one rural and one urban area. It is expected that these initiatives will impact positively on policy and processes in Jamaica; serve as pilots for replication in other locations; and support resource mobilization efforts.

Source: 1999 annual report of the resident coordinators.

Box 3

National experience on gender policy: Republic of Moldova

As a follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, in 1999 UNDP provided support to a five-year gender in development (GID) project. It has achieved considerable success in advancing its primary objective of promoting gender equality on political, social and economic levels. In particular, the project has greatly contributed to the establishment of a national mechanism for the promotion of women and to the adoption of several amendments to the current laws, such as an amendment to the effect that the parties and other social-political organizations will promote the principle of gender equality between women and men in all decision-making bodies of all levels to the law on Political Parties and Other Social-Political Organizations; an amendment to the Law on the Local Public Administration stipulates that the insurance of equal opportunities for women and men is within the competence of the community, city (municipality) etc.

During 1999, the GID project put special emphasis on the promotion of women in politics. In collaboration with the Beijing Group, it initiated a pilot project entitled "The role and the place of women in politics", which had the objective to encourage the political party leaders to include more female candidates on their election lists. As a result of the advocacy efforts of the projects' management and leaders of the Beijing Group, the number of women included in the political parties' lists increased to 193, as compared to 90 women in 1994. To ensure the equal participation of men and women in the democratization process, the project addressed to the Parliament a declaration which proposed the endorsement by the Parliament of a requirement to have no more than 70 per cent parliamentary seats occupied by one gender. With the same objective of promoting women in politics, the GID project started the pilot project "Women, society and politics", financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. The main objective was to empower women politicians, women at the decision-making levels and members of the civil society in order for them to mainstream gender equality in all sectors. An important component of the GID project was to facilitate poverty reduction among women. The project has provided training for unemployed women in marketing and management practices, in writing business plans, starting a business in the Republic of Moldova, receiving bank loans, and human resources management and financial analysis.

Source: 1999 annual report of the resident coordinators.

Box 4

National experience on microcredit: Azerbaijan

One example of a collaborative effort among agencies of the Azerbaijan country team to alleviate poverty is a project executed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and funded by UNDP to generate income and stimulate community development in the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic. Extreme poverty and lack of employment opportunities in Nakhichevan have led many people to migrate to neighbouring countries in search of employment. Recognizing the link between poverty and migration, IOM and UNDP have initiated a microcredit programme, training activities, and the rehabilitation of potable water systems. With a view to project sustainability, emphasis was placed on building the capacities of national project staff and on community involvement, in particular the involvement of project beneficiaries themselves, in the lending programme. With nearly 700 credit recipients and a loan repayment rate of more than 90 per cent, the project was a successful and significant force for alleviating poverty in Nakhichevan.

Source: 1999 annual report of the resident coordinators.

III. Challenges

7. Progress has been achieved in putting poverty eradication at the centre of the policy agenda and in formulating poverty eradication programmes and strategies in many countries. As outlined in section II above, many Governments have set national poverty reduction targets and formulated poverty eradication plans and strategies. Stronger emphasis has been placed on the promotion of macroeconomic growth, the creation and expansion of social security systems, efforts to increase public transfers and public spending on social services, equitable growth, the promotion of employment opportunities and creation of income-generating activities, capacity development, and specific programmes and projects in such areas as rural infrastructure development.

8. The important achievement after the Fourth World Conference on Women has been recognition by many Governments of a gender dimension of poverty and their efforts to refocus the poverty eradication programmes and policies to address the needs and concerns of women.

9. However, persistent problems, such as the lack of financial resources, the absence of well-trained human resources, reductions in public expenditures on social development, increased servicing of foreign debt, declining terms of international trade, poor physical infrastructure and inefficient administrative systems, still remain as major constraints to poverty eradication. Furthermore, economic growth rates have failed to match rapid population growth, thus creating new obstacles for poverty alleviation. Demographic changes in many parts of the world are also leading to new challenges and cause new obstacles in eradicating poverty. An increase in the number of people living in absolute poverty and the increasing feminization of poverty in many countries indicate that progress beyond the stage of good policies and plans towards actual implementation and results is inadequate.

10. While employment growth remains one of the most effective means of eradicating poverty, the number of unemployed and underemployed people, particularly women, appears to be growing. Poor working conditions, such as the lack of employment security, low wages, low quality work and low levels of social protection, persist. Though the situation seems to be improving, countries affected by recent financial crises have experienced an increase in unemployment and poverty that has undermined much of their long-term progress in reducing poverty and improving economic and social conditions. Economies in transition have also experienced, in different degrees, the loss of jobs and declining wages. Although full employment is accepted as a main objective of poverty eradication policy, a common framework for addressing employment policy issues and for integrating social concerns has yet to emerge.

11. Similarly, while equality between women and men is widely accepted as essential for economic and social development, the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into policies and programmes for poverty eradication and for the empowerment of women has lagged behind. In most countries, the employment of women has increased steadily; however, gender inequalities, as reflected in the wage gap and a disproportionate share of family responsibilities, have remained obstacles to women's equal access to and participation in the labour market. Women's inability to access financial credit and loans for small businesses, owing to lack of assets and resources, still exists and thus undermines women's economic activities.

In countries experiencing a lack of adequate employment and/or declining employment rates, women are often disproportionately affected and forced into the low-paid informal sector and out of social safety nets. In many parts of the world, this situation has also led to poverty, in particular the feminization of poverty, and social exclusion with inhuman consequences, such as forced prostitution, trafficking in women and children for purposes of prostitution and for sexual and other forms of exploitation, and the worst forms of child labour. Women's unpaid work remains unrecognized and unaccounted for in national accounts. To date, no universal measurement tools have been developed to evaluate women's unpaid work.

12. New perceptions of gender identities and roles have been evolving at the margin rather than in the mainstream. Women's participation in economic and political fields at the decision-making levels is stagnating. Women's productive and creative potential is largely underutilized.

13. These continuing problems call for intensified and coherent efforts on the part of national actors and the international community, in particular the United Nations system. Several recommendations in this regard are set out below.

IV. Recommendations

14. The following recommendations are made to further translate the recommendations contained in the ministerial communiqué adopted by the Economic and Social Council at the high-level segment of its substantive session of 1999 into concrete actions in support of national efforts:

(a) The Council may wish to reaffirm the commitments and recommendations contained in the communiqué. It could invite Governments to pursue and strengthen their efforts to work towards the goals of poverty eradication, employment creation and the empowerment and advancement of women, by implementing the recommendations of the communiqué and the commitments they undertook at the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and their five-year reviews, as well as at the World Education Forum and the other major conferences and summits of the 1990s;

(b) The Council may wish to welcome the steps already taken by a number of organizations of the United Nations system to translate the recommendations contained in the communiqué into concrete action. It may reiterate its call that the relevant United Nations system organizations take coherent, consistent, coordinated and joint actions in support of national efforts to eradicate poverty, paying particular attention to employment creation and work and the empowerment and advancement of women;

(c) Depending on the final outcome of the five-year review of the World Summit for Social Development to be held in June 2000, the Council could consider welcoming the adoption of the target of reducing by one half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015 (it may be recalled that the Council had taken note of this target in 1998 in its resolution 1998/44);

(d) The Council could invite the Administrative Committee on Coordination, the United Nations Development Group, the relevant Executive Committees and the resident coordinator system to further enhance their

efforts to coordinate the United Nations system-wide activities to support Governments in eradicating poverty, creating employment and promoting gender equality;

(e) The Council could reaffirm that it will continue to oversee system-wide coordination and provide overall guidance in working towards the goals of poverty eradication, full employment and the empowerment and advancement of women;

(f) The Council should promote a common system-wide approach to review the progress achieved and its impact on poverty eradication strategies, taking stock of progress made by the organizations of the United Nations system in this regard. The Council should also promote the capacity of national statistical systems to improve their ability to effectively measure the impact and progress of poverty eradication activities;

(g) The Council may wish to again urge all member States to honour the agreed financial targets, in particular with respect to the provision of adequate resources to ensure full implementation of the recommendations of the communiqué. It may also encourage member States to increase allocations for social expenditure targeted at poverty eradication;

(h) The Council may wish to urge all member States to spare no effort to ratify and implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, the Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and other relevant conventions. The Council could further welcome the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and invite member States who have not yet done so to sign the Optional Protocol;

(i) The Council should ensure that national and regional differences in the level of socio-economic development must be taken into account in international efforts to eradicate poverty, improve employment and achieve gender equality;

(j) The Council should encourage Governments, international organizations and civil society, including the media and the private sector, to further interact and establish broad alliances and coalitions for tripartite consensus within and across countries to implement poverty eradication policies and actions.

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/54/3/Rev.1), chap. III, para. 23.